



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Southeast Region

SOUTHEASTERN CURRENTS

JANUARY 2008 NEWSLETTER

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Intern Ingrid Kobler holds a crane securely, protecting its wings between her body and her arm and controlling the legs. Photo by Scott Hereford.

Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge prepares for winter crane release program

Winter is an exciting time at Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge. The anticipation of trapping, banding, and releasing cranes on the refuge is synonymous with our mission to protect and rebuild the endangered crane population.

To prepare, Supervisory Biologist Scott Hereford and biologist Lauren Billodeaux took biologist interns, Lisa Dlugolecki and Ingrid Kobler, and Park Ranger Emily Neidigh to the Audubon Center for Research of Endangered Species outside of New Orleans, Louisiana. At the Center, young cranes are reared in captivity. The Center incubates eggs and uses puppets to teach the cranes how to be successful before releasing the birds at the refuge. Puppets are used to raise them so that these cranes will not be imprinted on humans.

The crane handling experience learned at the Center is instrumental to running a successful release program each winter on the refuge. The refuge captive release program has been going on since February 1981. With the program, the wild crane population rebounded from only 35 individual birds to around 100. In addition to handling birds for release, the refuge traps cranes in order to band new recruits or replace radio transmitters.

Submitted by Emily Neidigh, Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR, Gautier, MS

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge holds groundbreaking for education and concession building

On Friday, November 30, 2007, staff and refuge supporters came together at Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge to participate in a groundbreaking ceremony marking construction progress on the new Environmental Education and Concession building. Following speeches from Refuge Manager George Constantino, Supervisory Ranger Jim Burkhart, Okefenokee Wildlife League President Patti Sandow, and U.S. Representative Jack Kingston (R-GA), representatives took up ceremonial gold shovels by a mound of fresh dirt at the construction site in front of the existing Visitor Center. Kingston's Communication Director Rob Asbell, U.S. Senator Johnny Isakson's Southeast Georgia Regional Director Jared Downs, and a delegation from the Georgia Department of Economic Development were among the attendees.

Initial funding for the new concession building project was approved by Congress in 2002, followed later by additional funding for expansion, including an environmental education classroom and storage. After several years of contracting and architectural negotiations, the work has finally begun. The facility is scheduled for completion within a year.



L to R:: Concession Okefenokee Adventures Co-owner Chip Campbell, Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge Manager George Constantino, Folkston Mayor Bill Staeger, Folkston Elementary School teacher Marward Howard, Clinch County Commissioner John "Wink" Strickland, U.S. Representative Jack Kingston, Okefenokee Wildlife League President Patti Sandow, Charlton County School Superintendent Steve McQueen, and Charlton County Administrator Steve Nance. Photo by John Reed.

Submitted by Sallie Gentry, Okefenokee NWR, Folkston, Georgia

Behind the Scenes--



Brittany Lynn Harris. Sears Photo.

New refuge family member at St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge

Monica Harris, refuge manager of St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge, welcomed Brittany Lynn Harris into the National Wildlife Refuge Family on September 22, 2007. Brittany weighed 7 pounds 2 ounces and was 19.5 inches. Monica returned to the refuge from maternity leave in mid December.

Submitted by Thom Lewis, St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge, Apalachicola, Florida

Jay Stanton receives Boy Scout Heroism Metal

At the Veterans Day celebration, November 11, on the Tyrrell County Courthouse steps in Columbia, North Carolina, the Boy Scouts of America presented the Heroism Medal to Jay Stanton, son of John and Wendy Stanton of Columbia., North Carolina. John and Wendy Stanton are both biologists with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. John works with the Migratory Bird Office, located at Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, and Wendy works at the refuge. Jay is a Webelos Cub Scout in Pack 86, sponsored by the Columbia Rotary Club.



Jay Stanton displays the Boy Scouts of America's Heroism Medal and certificate. His parents, John and Wendy Stanton, accompanied him. Photo by R. McClees.

The citation read, in part: On May 29, 2007, Jay, a fourth grader, attended a party at a local swimming pool where a lifeguard and other adults were watching the swimmers. A third grader was headed toward the deep end of the pool when he got into trouble. He was about five feet from the edge of the pool when he started having difficulty catching his breath. He could not swim. Jay, swimming in this area and wearing goggles, saw the boy straining to stay on the surface to breathe. Jay, having observed him both above and below the surface as he struggled, realized he was not playing.

Jay immediately approached the boy and attempted to give him aid. The boy thrashed around and tried to grab onto Jay. Watching out for his own safety, Jay carefully maneuvered the boy to safety at the side of the pool.

Jay put to use the training he had received from taking swimming classes and earning the Readyman badge in Cub Scouts. He recognized a person in distress, evaluated the situation, and acted quickly to provide aid.

"It is the opinion of the East Carolina Council and National Board of Reviews that one would expect no less of a Boy Scout. The Scout Oath states: 'To help other people at all times,'" said Michael Francis of Williamston who convened a National Court of Honor to award the medal. Francis is volunteer Commissioner for the Blackbeard District, East Carolina Council, Boy Scouts of America.

The audience of more than 150 people congratulated Jay with a standing ovation and long applause.

Submitted by Bonnie Strawser, Alligator River/Pea Island NWR, Manteo, North Carolina

Bragging Rights --



Belinda Johnson, Teresa Ward, Bruce Kennedy, and Acquanetta Reese. Photo by Rosla Plant.

Regional Office Ecological Services administrative staff tours fish hatchery

Regional Office Ecological Services Administrative Staff Employees Bruce Kennedy, Acquanetta Reese, Teresa Ward, and Belinda Johnson traveled to Warm Springs Regional Fisheries Center on November 13, for a field trip of the complex. A brief overview of the Fish Technology Center, Fish Health Center, and Hatchery facilities were given by various Warm Springs staff members, with Park Ranger Rosla Plant as lead. They also toured the Aquarium and Public Use Area. Other highlights of the day included a mussel shell name match and learning about genetic sequencing, cryopreservation techniques, and how the Fish Health lab uses various testing methods.

Submitted by Rosla Plant, Warm Springs Regional Fisheries Center, Warm Springs, Georgia

Georgia training will help staffs connect people with nature

Deborah Harris from the Georgia Ecological Services Field Office and Rosla Plant of the Warm Springs Regional Fisheries Center participated in Projects Wet and Wild and Learning Tree Facilitator Training. The training was held in Griffin, Georgia on November 15 and 16. The Effects of Drought on Water Quality, Wildlife, and Forests in Georgia workshop provided many valuable educational tools that will help staff at both facilities meet the Director's priorities to connect people with nature. Rosla and Deborah hope to conduct a Project Wet and Wild workshop together sometime in the future.



Rosla Plant and Deborah Harris. Photo by Linda May, Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Submitted by Rosla Plant, Warm Springs Regional Fisheries Center, Warm Springs, Georgia



Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Inc. member Jim Glahn (second from left) accepts the grant on behalf of the group at the recent Eastern Kentucky Personable Responsibility in the Environment (PRIDE) grant training. Photo by Jennifer Johnson of PRIDE.

Friends of Wolf Creek receive PRIDE grant

The Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Inc. received a 2007 environmental education grant from the Eastern Kentucky Personable Responsibility in the Environment (PRIDE) organization. With grant funds totaling \$3,600.00, the money will be used to purchase aquatic-related materials such as seine nets, waders, etc., to be used in conjunction with the hatchery's environmental education programs and workshops. Jim Glahn represented the Friends Group on November 13, in Somerset, Kentucky, for training on the grant's usage and to receive an award for the group's achievement.

Submitted by Amanda Patrick, Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Jametown, Kentucky

Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery parades through town

Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery staff members and their families helped spread a little holiday spirit by participating in the 2007 Russell Springs Christmas Parade. With the help of special guest



The hatchery stocking truck sits ready and waiting for the parade event. Photo by James Gray.

Goldie the Fish (Fishery Biologist Bob Clark), Project Leader James Gray, and Biological Technician Chris Murphy utilized one of the stocking trucks for their float, complete with some holiday decorations. Crowd participants were treated to candy fish as the truck passed by. Feedback from the event was positive, and all of the hatchery staff in attendance enjoyed the event



Goldie the Fish gets ready to leave Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery for the annual holiday festivities. Photo by James Gray.

Submitted by Amanda Patrick, Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Jamestown, Kentucky

Amphibian declines: translating science into urgent action

The decline of amphibian species over the last two decades is a problem unique in the history of conservation biology. Region-4 biologists Vince Mudrak and Chester Figiel participated in an international workshop that focused on amphibian species and ways to integrate science into conservation actions. One strategy considered by the Warm Springs Fish Technology Center is cryopreservation of gametes from imperiled populations. Cryopreservation provides a viable method for holding genetic material until techniques are perfected to control the emerging Bd-chytrid disease. This strategy can also serve for amelioration of global warming impacts to imperiled fish and amphibians.



Gray treefrog. Photo by Chester Figiel, Jr., PhD

Submitted by Chester Figiel, Jr., PhD, Warm Springs Fish Technology Center, Warm Springs, Georgia



Chester Figiel, fish biologist with the Warm Springs Fish Technology Center, measures the opening of a pipe culvert. FWS Photo.

The Little Tennessee River Fish Passage Working Group: A partnership for aquatic species in North Carolina

Aquatic organisms of the Little Tennessee River have some new crusaders working on their behalf, the Little Tennessee River Fish Passage Working Group (LTRWG). The group consists of partners working together to identify and prioritize barriers to fish passage in the Little Tennessee River Basin. Eight state agencies from North Carolina, one non-governmental agency, and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (the Asheville, North Carolina Ecological Services Field office and the Warm Springs Fish Technology Center in Georgia) met and formed a working group to help in the recovery of two

federally listed species; the spotfin chub and the Appalachian elktoe. The working group's goal is to remove barriers to fish passage and connect aquatic habitats. Surveys were conducted on approximately 127 crossings, upwards



An embedded culvert allows natural substrate to fill the culvert, resembling a stream, and allows aquatic organisms to travel up and down stream. FWS Photo.

to 353 river miles were assessed. The LTRWG is another example of Fisheries and Ecological Services working together for the recovery of aquatic resources.

Submitted by William Bouthillier, Warm Springs Fish Technology Center, Warm Springs, Georgia



Landowner partners inspect newly constructed trunk at the shop yard. Photo by Joe Cockrell.

Tenth Anniversary of South Carolina Partners Project

The end of 2007 marked ten years of habitat enhancement through the South Carolina Partners Project. The Project is a collaboration of conservation agencies and organizations which combine their resources to slow or reverse the loss of tidal, managed, wetlands in the coastal focus areas of South Carolina. Most of these unique habitats are historic ricefield impoundments. Private landowners receive technical and cost-share assistance in replacing deteriorated rice trunk water control structures which allow water levels to be managed for migratory birds. Project sites are located in close proximity to National Wildlife Refuges and other protected conservation lands. More than 6,480 acres of tidal managed wetland habitat has been enhanced, benefiting waterfowl, wading birds, shorebirds, raptors, and passerine birds,

including imperiled species. A total of 68 trunk structures have been replaced on 53 properties with landowners sharing over half of the costs. Participants in the South Carolina Partners Project are: private landowners; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; the Natural Resources Conservation Service; the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources; Ducks Unlimited; and Lowcountry Resource Conservation and Development Council.



Rice trunk installed in a dike in the South Lowcountry Focus Area. Photo by Joe Cockrell.

Submitted by Joe Cockrell, Charleston, South Carolina Ecological Services Field Office



Have You Kissed a Sturgeon Today? Volunteer, Ben Russell, with a close encounter. Photo by Frank Parauka.

Sturgeon roundup

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel from Private John Allen and Welaka National Fish Hatcheries and The Southeast Regional Office, representatives from Eglin Air Force Base, and 50 enthusiastic volunteers assisted Panama City, Florida Ecological Services Field Office staff this fall on the Choctawhatchee River. The partners netted threatened Gulf sturgeon as they migrated from the freshwater to overwinter in the marine environment. Over 600 Gulf sturgeons were collected and tagged during the dawn to dark netting operation that lasted four weeks. As many as 90 sturgeons were collected during a 12-hour period on two occasions. The largest fish weighed 144 pounds. The large number of juveniles (57 percent)

collected during the study indicates the population has experienced several years of successful reproduction since the last extensive survey conducted in 2001.



Ricky Campbell, Pvt John Allen NFH, admiring a Gulf sturgeon. Photo by Bill Tate.

Submitted by Frank Parauka, Panama City, Florida Ecological Services Field Office



Visitors made beautiful wreaths from greenery. Photo by Andrea Dunstan.

Christmas nature crafts day draws crowd

On November 17, the visitor center at Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge was crowded with people in a festive mood. The Friends of Noxubee Refuge held a nature crafts day. Among the crafts the visitors made were pinecone reindeer, wreaths from a variety of supplied greenery, and ornaments from pressed Queen Anne's lace. Crafts for wildlife also were a focus with bird feeders from fruit crates and pinecones stuffed with food for the birds. Everyone had fun decorating a tree for wildlife on the back deck.

Submitted by Andrea Dunstan, Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge, Mississippi

Great Delta Bear Affair biggest and best yet

The sixth annual Great Delta Bear Affair (GDBA) festival attracted more than 7,000 people to the quaint community of Rolling Fork, Mississippi, on October 27. It was the biggest and best one yet and was named a "Top 20 Event" by the Southeast Tourism Society.

Festival goers could relate to the 2007 GDBA theme "Bear Tracks through History" by attending seminars on black bears, other wildlife, wild-game cooking and Mississippi delta history. They could listen to storytelling, buy a book and get it signed by the Mississippi author, or talk with the Teddy Roosevelt living historian and his trusty hunting guide, Holt Collier. They could watch the Wildlife Olympics high school competition, join the archaeological tours of the area, or take a bird walk on the nearby Yazoo National Wildlife Refuge. And in between all of the heritage, cultural and natural resource activities, folks could participate in the first GDBA distance bicycle ride through the south delta, run or walk a 5K race around the town, or just sit back and enjoy continuous musical entertainment all day long, eat delicious homemade food, shop for arts and crafts among the 60-plus vendors, and be awed by a fireworks finale to rival most 4th of July displays.



Billy Joe Cross enjoys the opportunity to demonstrate his wild-game recipes from the well equipped cooking rig of GDBA sponsor Viking Range Corporation. Photo by Connie Light Dickard.

The day before the GDBA festival on October 26, one kick-off function included Youth Education Day for more than 400 Mississippi delta fourth graders. Natural resource professionals from a variety of agencies engaged the students in discussions, activities, games and presentations related to wildlife, our environment and natural resources of the area. The Sharkey-Issaquena Soil and Water Conservation District assisted with Youth Ed Day.

Another function, "Bear Bones Cooking with Billy Joe Cross," occurred that Friday evening. Chef Cross titillated taste buds at a special ticketed soiree where he prepared, demonstrated and served wild-game cuisine. Viking Range Corporation graciously provided their fully equipped, traveling cooking rig for Cross' use.

In addition to the two kick-off functions, one week prior to the festival on October 20, the Great Delta Bear Affair horse-trail ride was held on the Delta National Forest, which is just a stone's throw away from Rolling Fork.

Since its beginning in 2002, the goals of the Great Delta Bear Affair continue to be: (1) raise awareness about the federally

protected black bear, (2) commemorate Theodore Roosevelt's conservation legacy and his famous 1902 bear hunt in Mississippi that gave rise to the Teddy bear, and (3) highlight the natural resource opportunities of the state's delta region. To keep the GDBA going, many civic-minded people from Rolling Fork continue to work with representatives from organizations, and state and federal agencies, to plan and implement the festival and associated functions. Many individual contributors, along with committed corporate sponsors including Cellular South, Delta Telephone, Comcast, Entergy, Gannett Foundation, Viking Range Corporation, Diamond Jacks and "BEaR" the Bear Education and Restoration Group of Mississippi, provide the critical financial support necessary to make the Great Delta Bear Affair a reality. For more photos go to [Photo Album](#).

Contributed by Connie Light Dickard, Mississippi Ecological Services Field Office



Bobby Bryant whips up a pan of banana pudding. Photo by Patricia Lynch.

Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge hosts Bulls Island archery hunt

"You're going to eat with us aren't you?" Bobby Bryant, the Carroll family's camp cook, whipped up the meringue for banana pudding. No oven? No problem. Bryant used a blow torch to brown the topping. The savory smell of Brunswick stew wafted up from the iron kettle and, homemade cornbread was ready for the dutch oven.

Hearty camp-cooked meals, family gatherings, and camaraderie characterize the two annual archery hunts on Cape Romain's Bulls Island. This year, hunters enjoyed crisp, clear mornings and sunny afternoons during their week-long stays in November and December – perfect weather to scout the island for white-tailed deer. Eighty-nine archers participated in the November hunt and harvested 23 deer, the largest being a 122-pound buck taken by Ben Owens. In contrast to the activity in November, it was a quiet week for the 33 archers in December with three deer harvested. However, for the Cassells family who have been coming to the hunts for over more than 45 years, it was a memorable occasion. Dustin Cassells harvested a 110-pound buck, the first buck ever taken by a family member.

The archery hunts on Bulls Island serve two important purposes. The harvest of surplus deer is a management tool used to maintain a healthy population and, archery is a challenging and wholesome form of outdoor recreation. More photos in [Photo Album](#).

Submitted by Patricia Lynch, Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge, Awendaw, South Carolina

Vieques National Wildlife Refuge links girls to the land

For a year, Girl Scouts in Vieques have been helping the Refuge's staff with a conservation and education sea turtle project. This year, through the Linking Girls to the Land Council Grants Fund, Vieques scouts were awarded \$5,000 to officially assist with the project. The Vieques Girl Scouts will be monitoring leatherback sea turtles at different beach sites of the refuge. This project involves environmental education, outdoor skills development, volunteer service learning, and career exploration. This collaborative effort will allow the girls to feel empowered by being able to make a difference and advocate for improvement on the management and conservation of Vieques natural resources.



Girl Scouts with a leatherback sea turtle. FWS Photo.

Hats Off --



Bob Teagarden (left) receives Refuge Volunteer of the Year Plaque from Biologist Kris Fair (center) and Refuge Manager Mike Bryant (right). Photo by Mary Helen Goodloe-Murphy, The Coastland Times

Alligator River and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge volunteers honored

Recently, volunteers of Pea Island and Alligator River National Wildlife Refuges were honored for their dedication and hard work. During the awards presentations, Bob Teagarden was recognized as the Volunteer of the Year for 2007. The award for "High Sales Day" in the Visitor Center was captured by John and Laura Gilson. The record career-high hours award was presented to Warren Davis for a cumulative 7,000 hours of volunteer service. In addition to individual awards, all volunteers received their choice of several heirloom-quality limited-edition stained glass suncatchers custom-made by Alison Ellis of Green Heron Glass in Engelhard.

Refuge manager Mike Bryant began the presentations with a simple statement, "I want to thank you for your help."

"These volunteers help conserve, manage, and protect the fish and wildlife of the United States that visit or live in Pea Island and Alligator River National Wildlife refuges," said Bryant. "They are the backbone of the labor force for many refuge programs."

Several general categories of volunteers have donated energy and time to both refuges. The most visible and, probably the most crucial, are the local volunteers - folks who live in the local communities all or part of the year and donate time to the refuges on a regular basis. Because they live here, these volunteers serve as ambassadors for refuges in the communities. These dedicated folks are aided by resident volunteers who live in their own RVs on sites provided by the refuge and interns, who live in government housing and volunteer full-time. Both of the residential volunteer types work full- or part-time for a specific length of time, usually 3 to 6 months. Local volunteers provide continuity. Resident volunteers add numbers to the workforce and new ideas from other places they've served.

"These volunteers join forces to accomplish so much work", explains Volunteer Coordinator Abbey Reibel. "They staff the Visitor Center over 360 days a year, lead bird walks at least weekly year-round, guide two to six canoe tours a week for seven months of the year, drive the beaches looking for sea turtle nests, baby-sit the nests until they hatchlings make it all the way to the ocean, build things, maintain trails, pick up trash, Golly, they do whatever we need!"

For one group of volunteers, sea turtles are the main focus. And, they work sea turtle nests on both ends... both when they laid and when they hatch! On Pea Island refuge, volunteers drive the length of refuge beaches every morning during the summer looking for turtle crawls. When nest hatches are expected, volunteers arrive on the beach around 6 p.m. to set up equipment and watch nests for hatchlings to emerge. Through rain, wind and steamy nights and with annoying bugs buzzing, these volunteers sit watch.



Fall interns for Alligator River and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges: (left to right) Brett Idol, Lauren Spears, Joe Ibarra, and Traci Foulkes. Photo by Mary Helen Goodloe-Murphy, The Coastland Times.

This year, the refuge honored one of those long-time turtle program participants as the Volunteer of the Year. Bob Teagarden has

watched and patrolled for turtles for almost a decade. As an early morning ATV rider, Teagarden has logged 3,500 miles looking for the tell-tale signs of turtle activity. Teagarden designed and fabricated an improved predator guard for nests. He created an infrared listening device to hear hatchlings in the nest. Teagarden, who lives in Frisco, has always been ready to fill-in when needed. Presenting the award were Bryant and Refuge Biologist Kris Fair. This award acknowledged Teagarden as an excellent and superior volunteer with heart and dedication.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service volunteers are awarded certificates after completing 100 hours of service. Volunteers then receive a pin for hours totaling 250 and 500 and moving upward in increments of 500 hours.

For 20 years, Warren Davis has staffed a Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge visitor center. After retirement, Davis started his new career answering visitor questions and selling t-shirts in one room of the Pea Island headquarters. Today, Davis takes a shift at the refuge's popular visitor center, which the Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society operates for the benefit of the two refuges. Davis helped start that organization and continues to serve on the board. Davis was the first Volunteer of the Year for the refuges in 1988. This year, Warren Davis received a pin representing 7,000 hours of time amassed over two decades of volunteer service.

Pat Moore leads bird walks and serves on the steering committee for the annual Wings over Water Wildlife Festival. She received a pin representing 2,500 hours of cumulative volunteer service.

In northeastern North Carolina refuges, interns provide valuable assistance in managing natural resources, providing visitor services and interpretation. Interns are volunteers who usually work on a refuge for a minimum of three months. Housing and a food stipend are provided. Generally, interns are college-aged students with an interest in natural resource management, biology or a related field. Interns worked in Pea Island and Alligator River refuges year-round during 2007. These refuge interns earned certificates, 250 hour and 500-hour pins for their work.

Submitted by Bonnie Strawser, Alligator River/Pea Island NWR, Manteo, North Carolina



Bill Bouthillier, fish biologist from WSFTC, receiving an award from Ducks Unlimited President Bruce Lewis in Anchorage, Alaska. Photo by Ducks Unlimited, Inc.

Bill Bouthillier receives Ducks Unlimited award

Bill Bouthillier, a fish biologist with the Warm Springs Fish Technology Center (WSFTC) in Warm Springs, Georgia was honored at the National Convention of Ducks Unlimited (DU) in Anchorage, Alaska, this past May for his hard work in raising funds for DU's conservation efforts. In 2001, Bill stepped up to the challenge of taking a leadership role by becoming an Area Chair for a local chapter of DU. Since then, he has been honored as the State Area Chair of the Year for 2002 and 2003 and State District Chair of the Year for 2004 and 2005. To date, Bill has raised approximately \$458,000 for wetland and waterfowl conservation. Due to his compassion and commitment to DU, he has been appointed to become the new State Chair for the state of Georgia and its 17,000 members.

Submitted by Bill Bouthillier, Warm Springs Fish Technology Center, Warm Springs, Georgia

Photo Album --

Great Delta Bear Affair biggest and best yet -- more photos -- (All photos by Connie Light Dickard.)



Herpetologist Terry Vandeventer teaches fourth graders about snakes found in Mississippi. Photo by Connie Light Dickard.



First-time vendors and entrepreneurs sell their creative horseshoe crafts.



Elvis, a Mississippi native, is one of 11 musical acts to perform at the GDBA.



The Grayhounds make music on stage while the fireworks overhead bring GDBA to a climatic close.

Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge hosts Bulls Island archery hunt -- more photos



Randy Rabon takes an eight-point buck. Photo by Patricia Lynch.



Archers leave Bulls Island for the mainland. Photo by Patricia Lynch.



Morning coffee at Cassells camp.
Photo by Patricia Lynch.

Visitor Services --

Girl Scout Ashley Long benefits Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges



The game encouraged kids to ask questions about other sea creatures.
Photo by Pam Darty.

Former 2007 Youth Conservation Corps student, Ashley Long changed her career goals after her summer's work at the Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges. The hot humid weather of the refuge seemed to encourage her hard work: Together with three other YCC teens, Branden Jenkins, Joshua Loyd, and Sierra Quesnell, she helped build an 1,000-foot boardwalk, reconstruct a fishing deck, mark boundaries, and pick up after litterers. She has decided she wants to work in the outdoors.

For her Senior Girl Scout project, the Gold Award, she chose the Refuge Ranger as her mentor and asked to perform her service project for the refuge. Prior to National Wildlife Refuge Week, she wrote articles for her local newspaper promoting awareness of the refuge and encouraging stewardship. Ashley also wrote an article about the National Wildlife Refuge Week Open House.

Ashley created an exhibit and game featuring the research being done on Seahorse Key, an important rookery that is part of the Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuge. She staffed the refuge booth and her exhibit during the two-day Open House at Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuge with her mentor, Ranger Pam Darty, and other staff members. She interpreted the symbiotic relationship between the moccasins of Seahorse Key and the birds of the island's rookery with the game she developed.

With new career interests brewing, Girl Scout Ashley Long has started to feel that passion that pulls us all to do the work we do – where wildlife comes first.



Ashley painted the ibis bill and wrote interpretive lessons for the game.
Photo by Pam Darty.

Submitted by Pam Darty, Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges, Chiefland, Florida

Wage Grade Profile --

Otis Bentley retires from Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex



Otis Bentley. Photo by Patricia Metz.

On January 3, 2008 Heavy Equipment Operator Otis Bentley ended his 35-year career at the Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex in Georgia. Otis joined the Service in 1972 and began working alongside his father, Harry Bentley, who was Savannah National Wildlife Refuge's tractor operator. Working up from the dirtiest job on the refuge as an "oiler" for his dad on a relic dragline, Otis mastered every piece of heavy equipment ever used on the complex. His skill with draglines is legendary, and project leaders throughout the Southeast tried in vain to woo him from Savannah. Otis, however, stayed true to his roots, even recruiting two additional members of the Bentley Clan into work for the Service. Nephews Jack Bentley (Engineering Equipment Operator) and Vic Scott (Tractor Operator) both now work on the Savannah Coastal Refuges. His years spent on Savannah, working within its 3,000-acre impoundment system, have made Otis somewhat of an expert in managing freshwater. When a new biologist was hired in 1988, it was Otis who taught him everything he needed to know about moist soil management.

His accomplishments are many, and his dedication to the resource unmatched. The staff of Savannah Coastal Refuges wishes Otis the absolute best that retired life has to offer!



L-R: Vic Scott, Otis Bentley, and Harry "Jack" Bentley; the second and third generations of Bentleys to work on Savannah National Wildlife Refuge. Photo by Patricia Metz.

Submitted by Amy Ochoa, Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex, Savannah, Georgia